Born in Manchester, England in 1968, Chris Ofili first came into the art scene during the 1990s as a member of the Young British Artists—a group of artists associated with the Saatchi Gallery, which gained international recognition and notoriety with the Sensation exhibition in 1997. The next year Ofili won the Turner Prize and subsequently represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2003. He has continued to pursue his ongoing artistic career in Trinidad to this day.

This is the first monograph to provide a complete survey of Chris Ofili's artistic career. As such, the majority of this book is dedicated to color reproductions of the artist's work. At first glance it might seem as though some of the illustrations obscure the details of Ofili’s large-scale paintings, however this has more to do with the complex textural nature of his works than the quality of reproductions. Additionally, there are a number of detail images that offer a closer look at the highly decorative and vibrant surfaces.

Although a heavily illustrated work, this book also includes a selected bibliography, an exhibition history, a foreword by Peter Doig, two written works by Kara Walker and Cameron Shaw, an interview by Thelma Golden, and three essays. Each essay marks a pivotal moment in Ofili’s career with the first examining the vandalism of Ofili’s The Holy Virgin Mary, 1996 at the Sensation show. In “Brooklyn Museum: Messing with the Sacred,” Carol Becker outlines the controversy and the effect it had on the reading of Ofili’s work in the United States. David Adjaye, a British architect who collaborated with Ofili to construct The Upper Room installation at the Victoria Miro Gallery, London in 2002 penned the next essay. Adjaye suggests that the concept of their partnership was to create a “magical” and “meditative” atmosphere for viewing the paintings in a unique environment. These concerns and ideas are examined further in the third essay in which Okwui Enwezor discusses the Venice Biennale installation.

The interview with Golden allows Ofili the chance to comment on the arc of his career. He elaborates on themes that have been a constant in his work, such as African-American popular culture, religion, spirituality, and the African Diaspora. The conversation is very insightful, and in conjunction with the reproductions of rarely seen early paintings and newer sculptural work offers the reader a greater understanding of the artist. For these reasons Chris Ofili is highly recommended for all academic and art libraries supporting research in the field of contemporary art.

Melanie Emerson, Senior Reference Librarian, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, memerson@artic.edu